

Appln. No. 09/894,608
Amendment dated Mar. 1, 2006
Reply to Office Action of Dec. 1, 2005
Docket No. 6169-208

IBM Docket No. BOC9-2000-0073

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

These remarks are made in response to the Final Office Action of December 1, 2005 (Office Action). As this action is timely filed within the three-month shortened statutory period, no fees are believed due.

Claims 1-17 were rejected on the basis of a new combination of references cited at pages 2-3 of the Office Action. The claims were rejected in the Office Action under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over by the article by Pitt, *et al.*, titled "An Improved Auditory Interface for the Exploration of Lists," *ACM Multimedia 97* (hereinafter "Pitt") in view of U.S. Published Patent Application No. 2003/0158738 to Crosby, *et al.* (hereinafter "Crosby").

Independent Claims 1, 7, and 11 have been amended to further emphasize certain aspects of Applicants' invention. As discussed herein, the amendments are fully supported throughout the Specification. (See, e.g., Specification, p. 8, lines 9-25; p. 9, lines 6-20; and p. 10, lines 11-20.) No new matter has been introduced by virtue of the claim amendments.

Applicants' Invention

It may be useful at this juncture to reiterate certain aspects of Applicants' invention prior to addressing the references cited in the Office Action. One embodiment of the invention, typified by independent Claim 1, as amended, is a computer-implemented list presentation method. The method can include providing an audible prompt through a speech user interface. The audible prompt can instruct a user to provide speech input designating a search topic. The method further can include converting the user-provided speech input into a computer-readable text representation of a topic-indicating phrase

Appln. No. 09/894,608
Amendment dated Mar. 1, 2006
Reply to Office Action of Dec. 1, 2005
Docket No. 6169-208

IBM Docket No. BOC9-2000-0073

corresponding to the search topic and comprising one or more distinct words. (See, e.g., Specification, p. 8, lines 9-25.)

Additionally, the method can include selecting items from at least one database, the selection being based on the topic-indicating phrase corresponding to the search topic, and the selected items comprising other distinct words that each have a predetermined association with said search topic. (See, e.g., Specification, p. 9, lines 6-8.) The selection can be based on identifying words whose spelling is the same as, or similar to, the one or more words indicating the search topic or, more particularly, a word or words comprising the topic-indicating phrase. (See, e.g., Specification, p. 9, lines 8-13.)

The method is not limited in this respect, however. The selection also can be based on identifying words whose spelling is different from, or dissimilar to, a word or words corresponding to the search topic. In such instances, the predetermined association between the word items and the search topic can be expressed using, for example, meta data, which identifies various word items having the particular predetermined association with the search topic. (See, e.g., p. 9, lines 14-20; see also p. 9, line 27 – p. 10, line 20.)

The method also includes dynamically grouping the selected items in a list corresponding to the search topic and labeling each group of selected items. Additionally, the method can include audibly presenting each group label through the speech user interface, and, in response to a user's selection of one audibly presented group label, presenting the selected items corresponding to the selected label using the speech user interface.

The Claims, As Amended, Define Over The Cited References

As already noted, the claims were rejected on a new combination of references. In particular, independent Claims 1, 7, and 11 were rejected as unpatentable over Pitt in view of Crosby.

Appln. No. 09/894,608
Amendment dated Mar. 1, 2006
Reply to Office Action of Dec. 1, 2005
Docket No. 6169-208

IBM Docket No. BOC9-2000-0073

Pitt provides a computer-implemented program for audibly presenting a list of DOS-style filenames, the manner of presentment intended to more closely replicate human organizational and speech patterns as a way of aiding visually impaired computer users. (See p. 56, col. 1 ; see also Abstract.) The program is based on a series of experiments that were conducted in order to establish an organization and voice presentation of lists that would assist a user in recalling a spoken directory-listing. (p. 51, col. 2 through p. 56, col. 1).

Based on the experimental results, the Pitt program sorts filenames into groups of items that preferably contain fewer than six filenames. The Pitt program further arranges the groups into a hierarchy. (p. 56, col. 1.) More particularly, Pitt's is a three-stage file-sorting program. During a first phase, the Pitt program first places into a single group all filenames that share a string of four or more characters. Each group is then sorted so that any filenames that share a common "full" filename are placed into subgroups. Subsequently, the filenames are sorted within each sub-group based on "purely alphabetical" and numerical extensions. (p. 56, col. 2). In a second phase of Pitt's three-stage file-sorting program, any remaining filenames are sorted by their extension. Finally, in a third phase, any filenames not previously grouped are sorted into one of two groups: one containing filenames with extensions, and the other containing filenames without an extension. (p. 56, col. 2).

Crosby, by contrast, is directed to a method and apparatus for processing travel-related speech input using a network-connected travel server. (See, e.g., paragraphs 0006-0008.) The travel server receives a speech input corresponding to a travel-related task, the speech input is converted into data reflecting the travel-related task, a database containing information corresponding to the travel-related task is then accessed, and the stored information is returned. (paragraphs 0015 and 0016.)

Appln. No. 09/894,608
Amendment dated Mar. 1, 2006
Reply to Office Action of Dec. 1, 2005
Docket No. 6169-208

IBM Docket No. BOC9-2000-0073

Applicants respectfully maintain that, even when combined, Pitt and Crosby fail to teach or suggest every feature of independent Claims 1, 7, and 11, as amended. For example, neither reference teaches or suggests selecting items from at least one database wherein the selection corresponds to a given search topic and wherein selected items comprise both similarly and dissimilarly spelled words that each have a predetermined association with the search topic.

Pitt is cited at page 3 of the Office Action as teaching a mechanism for dynamically grouping selected items into a list based on a commonality of sequentially positioned symbols. The asserted teaching is said to be based on Pitt's sorting of file names based on common sequences of characters found in the respective file names.

Pitt's reliance on finding a common sequence of characters in two or more character strings, however, precludes the selection of items that have no common spelling; that is, Pitt is incapable of identifying an item for inclusion in a topic-based group if the spelling of the item is dissimilar from a particular spelling of the word or words used to indicate the particular search topic. A particular item may logically have a predetermined association with a particular search topic, but if the word spelling of the item does not include a sequence of letters that match, one-to-one, the letters of the search topic, then the item will not be included in a grouping constructed according to Pitt. Pitt forms a group based on common sequences of symbols, not on the basis of a predetermined association between items and a search topic.

Accordingly, Pitt is incapable of selecting items from at least one database for inclusion in a search-topic group, wherein the group comprises both similarly and dissimilarly spelled words having a predetermined association with the search topic. It further follows, therefore, that Pitt is incapable of dynamically grouping selected items comprising similarly and dissimilarly spelled words having a predetermined association

Appln. No. 09/894,608
Amendment dated Mar. 1, 2006
Reply to Office Action of Dec. 1, 2005
Docket No. 6169-208

IBM Docket No. BOC9-2000-0073

with a search topic or labeling such a group of selected items with a corresponding search topic label.

Pitt's sorting of file names on the basis of a one-to-one correspondence between separate sequences of characters in each file name, moreover, poses an inherent problem when Pitt is applied to the task of topic-based sorting. The problem is that Pitt cannot select or group items based on distinct words or phrases. Consider, for example, a file named OLDNEWS.TXT, which is in the directory with SORTING.C, SORTING.EXE, NEWSORT.C and NEWSORT.EXE. Pitt's common symbol sequence sorting would result in the creation of a spurious NEWS group that would contain NEWSORT.C, NEWSORT.EXE, and OLDNEWS.TXT. The group is spurious because the first two files have to do with sorting rather than news; nonetheless, the filenames still contain the character string "NEWS" in their filenames. This inherent problem further precludes Pitt's performing in the same manner as Applicants' invention in the context of selecting, grouping and presenting items corresponding to a given search topic.

Crosby, which is cited in the Office Action only as teaching the prompting for speech input to conduct a database search based on the speech input, does not provide the features lacking in Pitt. Specifically, Crosby does not teach the aspects of creating and presenting a topic-based list having the various features recited in amended independent Claims 1, 7, and 11.

Accordingly, neither Pitt nor Crosby, alone and in combination, teaches or suggests each of the various features recited in amended independent Claims 1, 7, and 11. Applicants, therefore, respectfully submit that each of independent Claims 1, 7, and 11, as amended, defines over the prior art. Applicants further respectfully submit that whereas each of the remaining claims depends from one of amended independent Claims 1, 7, and 11 while also reciting additional features, each of the dependent claims likewise defines over the prior art.

Appln. No. 09/894,608
Amendment dated Mar. 1, 2006
Reply to Office Action of Dec. 1, 2005
Docket No. 6169-208

IBM Docket No. BOC9-2000-0073

CONCLUSION

The Applicants believe that this application is now in full condition for allowance. Allowance of the application, accordingly, is respectfully requested. The Applicants request that the Examiner call the undersigned if clarification is needed on any matter within this Response, or if the Examiner believes a telephone interview would expedite the prosecution of the subject application to completion.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: March 1, 2006



Gregory A. Nelson, Registration No. 30,577

Richard A. Hinson, Registration No. 47,652

Marc A. Boillot, Registration No. 56,164

AKERMAN SENTERFITT

Customer No. 40987

Post Office Box 3188

West Palm Beach, FL 33402-3188

Telephone: (561) 653-5000